Title: **Globalisation, Multiple Histories and Contested Identities: Assessing Shauna Singh Baldwin, Rohinton Mistry and Anita Rau Badami's Fictions**

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Synopsis

All literatures represent at heart, the communion or relationship between man and his society, culture and traditions. History, whether social, cultural or political is always the defining factor which comes to us in various forms—verbally or through other pseudo-concrete manifestations (like monuments, IDs, birthdays and so on). Also, today, in a postcolonial / global world, humans attempt to occupy spaces instead of places, where concepts of migrations, identity(s) and personal histories merge for both contestation and re-negotiation. Thus in the modern day, there has been a paradigm shift from identity formation based on notions of nation, space and place towards desire for belonging and rootedness especially with changes taking place with the advent of globalisation,virtual world, has entered our regular lives, caught up in the virtuality. Time has created new Baudrillardian sense of hyperreality. In such a situation erstwhile notions of migration have completely given way to it being a vantage point. In fact the entire thesis had challenged and tried to look at alternative solutions to conventional definitions of the themes that had been taken up in each of the chapters included here. As such, the aim of the research was to arrive at the multiple histories and contested identities of such writers as Rohinton Mistry, Shauna Singh Baldwin and Anita Rau Badami, analyse their attempts at survival and negotiation and locate them within their fictional narratives, whether individual, shared or global. It had also dealt with the response and the resonance in most of the possible traditions expressed in various texts, which interrogates the assimilation process altogether.Being acutely aware of his mixed inheritance, and his own experience of cultural dislocation, Mistry set about penning the anguishing problems of the Parsis and their encounter in a country which they belong to, apparently, but not quite. On a similar note, Baldwin, like many other people with 'multiple histories' and 'contested identities' is quite comfortable with the idea of discomfort in the parameters which actually define an individual. In most of the texts of both Baldwin and Badami we find a constant flux, a flux that could not be fixed because this flux is about them, being always on the move. This flux both internal and external had triggered texts like the ones that has been selected here, validating the contrapuntal perceptions of things, that one needs to look at and realise. Hence globalization can be seen to claim an assimilation that can at best be feigned and imposed, to an extent. It is very hard for writers of the fringe to even consider this act which necessitated them to be placed in a continuously homogenizing and atomizing frame that could accommodate them in a modern hybrid diasporic world.

In the first chapter titled 'Migration'—A Metaphor?', a basic history of migration as a process and 'journey' as a metaphor had been discussed and taken into account. Broadly speaking, in the context and definition of diaspora, giving detailed account of its genealogy, certain sense of history of migration has also been accorded. This metaphor of journey is used in many layers, both intrinsic and extrinsic. The process or destination or even the intension of a journey has been analysed and dissected into stages taking cue from various critics. Journey or any kind of travel has come up time and again metaphorically to cater to the author's demands. In Anita Rau Badami's *The Hero's Walk* and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* we find journey both overtly as well as covertly coming in, surfacing the subtle message that harks the changes that was about to come to pass. All these and more with other examples from the same text and also other texts establish the metaphorical nature of the trope 'journey'.

The second chapter, titled "Constructing Nation and Nationalism" traces the path that had been paved by critics and historians who had found the legacy of the concept of 'nation' that had entered into the history of India. What socio-political and economic factors have governed in its inception gives way to the reference frame in the chapter. Talking about the 'contingent genealogies'(196) that Avtar Brah had significantly stated in her earlier mentioned book, the thrust begins to rest on the growing complexities in attributing proper definitions, identity markers, diasporic individuals, which further tend to shuttle between one sense of consciousness while travelling between two nations. Challenging the "originary absolute" (Brah) then becomes the norm of the chapter. Brah also raises questions about *how* and *why* "originary absolutes" are imagined and also "how the materiality of economic, political and signifying practices is experienced". The major objective of the chapter is to sketch the way "nationalism" has been geographically represented as it had had evolved over the period of years post independence of India, with special reference to texts as mentioned earlier starting right from the process of 'nation' building to the formation of 'nationness' and 'nationalism'. Also important is the way how ethnicity and religion plays an effective role in shaping the perspective of individuals. Shauna Singh Baldwin's oft-quoted text *What the Body Remembers* (1999), Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* (1991) and *A Fine Balance* (1996) and Anita Rau Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?*, these issues surface most explicitly. Baldwin's three texts "A Pair of Ears", *What the Body Remembers* and*The Selector of Souls* selected here are to be analyzed graphically to chart the different/changing notions of 'nation' and how concepts of 'nationalism' had evoked over the period of years that these texts intend to cover. The chapter thus concludes with the discovery that there is an 'emergent property' of nationness and nationalism in each of the characters even though they are separately placed in the broader scheme of things, also they are in a way interconnected character types which is revealed when these three individual writers' works are read as belonging to one literary system.

The third chapter "Construction of 'Home', 'Hybridity' and 'Citizenship'" following some postcolonial critics' belief in the face of complexity of globalisation, the necessity to demarcate the differences (however subtle) between postcolonialism and globalisation has been felt, all the more because the notion of a definite "home" and "nation-state" dissolves with globalisation. The main idea of the chapter triggered from three essays—one by Heike Harting, "Diasporic Cross-Currents in Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* and Anita Rau Badami's *The Hero's Walk*", the second by Anh Hua "Homing Desire, Cultural Citizenship and Diasporic Imaginings" and finally Marwan M. Kraindy's "Hybridity in Cultural Globalisation". 'Home' had been an elusive

concept for most postcolonial authors, especially after the acceptance of the assumption that no longer an individual's identity can be zeroed down to a specific set of geo-political locales. Notions of "home" had been evolving in the altered sense, so much so that there are some spaces, mostly in-between and non-aligned which incorporate such feelings of belonging and rootedness. These realisations can be extended to texts like Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers* and *We are Not in Pakistan,* also Badami's *Tamarind Mem* and *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* The concept of 'Home' gets all the more complicated with the advent and popularising of the 'practice' of transnationalism. In texts of Rohinton Mistry like *A Fine Balance* and *Such a Long Journey*, too, questions about the other two parameters 'hybridity' and 'citizenship' has been called into question, thereby showing the surrogate side of the picture. In the final chapter, "'Third Space': A Projected Elite Utopia?" effort have been made to reboot the idea of eminent scholar Homi. K. Bhaba's concept of 'third space' in the similar context. The inquiry is about the possibility of 'third space' after theembracement of critical theory and transnationalism and the huge expectancy that it has triggered of coming to a comfortable seamless boundary line propagating harmony and co-existence. In texts like Anita Rau Badami's *The Hero's Walk* (2000) andShauna Singh Baldwin, *The Selector of Souls, Reluctant Rebellions* and *We are Not in Pakistan*, the research has delved into finding that this 'third space' may well be a space in the virtual world of social media, which is another offshoot of cultural globalization. 'Third Space', Bhaba posited, entails a liminality. The crux of the chapter is that questions are to be raised about the plausibility of such a moment andtracing how (or if at all) this 'third space' of 'lived experience' possible! Is this 'third space' then constantly shifting like *difference* by Derrida?

Thus we could see that no longer are our 'histories' and 'identity/(-es) however complex it might be, are governed by concrete principles. Unlike earlier like the way, 'nation' was defined by parameters mostly tangible, now with the advent of a digital world parallel to us, it has become very difficult both to be aloof from the process and also be spontaneously part of it. Individuals are continuously consumed in the process, and hence it affects and shapes the new character they assume.

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